

I referred earlier to the popular notion that "repression is an evil thing and to be avoided at all costs. This notion is, however, by no means soundly based. Repression cannot be avoided in this massive sense, since it is one of the general mechanisms by which every ego deals, at a certain level of psycho-sexual development, with those impulses which cannot be satisfied in actual life, and the stress of which stirs up anxiety and guilt. Some degree of repression is thus essential to a balanced conscious life and adaptation to reality. Whether or not repression is Harmful in its outcome is a matter of its degree and its particular incidence. And its amount and incidence are not directly within the control of the educator. Repression is an internal and unconscious mechanism, not to be confused with external restraint or inhibition. Whether, when and how deeply the child represses his own wishes (that is to say, turns away from them and treats them as if they did not exist) will always depend more upon the internal balance of forces than upon external events as such. The pressures we exert externally can increase the severity of repression, as, for instance, by demonstrating to the child that no sort of aggressive or sexual behaviour will be condoned; but we cannot enact that no repression shall occur, nor can we determine, as educators, its amount and internal distribution. The values which the child's own phantasies lead him to give to our actual behaviour will determine the degree of anxiety he experiences in any particular situation ; and it is this anxiety which sets going the mechanism of repression. Naturally, our own deeper emotional attitudes will affect the child even more sensitively than our explicit teachings.

Moreover, the idea that if we leave the child entirely free

to do what he likes we are thereby " avoiding
repression
is a mistaken one, since, as I have already
shown, this simply
means leaving the child at the mercy of his own
primitive
super-ego, with all its accompanying
phantasies of retribu-
tion. We do not, and cannot leave him free to
the expression
of simple, uninhibited wishes, as is sometimes
imagined.

Nevertheless, it is clearly essential that the
child should not
be deprived by his environment of all
satisfactions or indirect
outlets for his unconscious wishes and
phantasies. The
environment can undoubtedly make a great
difference to the
psychic equilibrium of the child, as well as to
his real gifts